



Wattled Ibis *Bostrychia carunculata*, Lake Langano, Ethiopia, December 1990 (Karel Beylevelt)
Ibis caronculé *Bostrychia carunculata*, *Lac de Langano, Ethiopie, décembre 1990* (Karel Beylevelt)



Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii*, Wadera, Ethiopia, November 1994 (Iain Robertson)
Touraco de Prince Ruspoli *Tauraco ruspolii*, *Wadera, Ethiopie, novembre 1994* (Iain Robertson)



Blue-winged Goose *Cyanochen cyanopterus*, Gafersa Reservoir, Ethiopia, December 1990 (Karel Beylevelt)
Ouettes à ailes bleues *Cyanochen cyanopterus*, *Réservoir de Gafersa, Ethiopie, décembre 1990* (Karel Beylevelt)



Rouget's Rail *Rougetius rougetii*, Bale Mountain, Ethiopia, December 1990 (Karel Beylevelt)
Rôle de Rouget Rougetius rougetii, Montagnes Bale, Ethiopie, décembre 1990 (Karel Beylevelt)



Stresemann's Bush Crow *Zavattariornis stresemanni*, Yavello, Ethiopia, December 1990 (Karel Beylevelt)
Corbeau de Stresemann Zavattariornis stresemanni, Yavello, Ethiopie, décembre 1990 (Karel Beylevelt)



Abyssinian Catbird *Parophasma galinieri*, Dinsho, Ethiopia, November 1994 (Brian Goodwin)
Timalie d'Abyssinie Parophasma galinieri, Dinsho, Ethiopie, novembre 1994 (Brian Goodwin)

Photospot: Ethiopian Endemics

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Ethiopia is rapidly becoming one of Africa's birding hotspots possessing as it does an impressive avifauna of over 850 species, including 29 species endemic to Ethiopia and Eritrea and at least one more awaiting formal description. In addition many species in Ethiopia are remarkably tame enabling observers to obtain outstanding views and photographs, as evidenced by the small selection published here.

A considerable amount of fieldwork is now being carried out in the country and an atlas project is underway. The ABC would encourage members visiting Ethiopia to send copies of trip reports etc to the atlas co-ordinators. Further information and recording forms are available from John Atkins, c/o FCO (Addis Ababa), King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH, UK.

Wattled Ibis

Bostrychia carunculata

This ibis is very much a highland bird, found between 1,500 m and 4,100 m on the plateaux of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Within this range it is widespread and largely sedentary, thought to undertake only local, altitudinal movements. It is found in high altitude moorlands, seasonal wetlands, swamp margins and in cultivated fields. Indeed, the Wattled Ibis has become well adapted to anthropic landscapes and conditions; for example, it is to be seen regularly within the confines of Addis Ababa.

When foraging, in flocks of up to 100 birds, this ibis walks in a stately manner probing at intervals for food, thought to be mostly worms and insects, particularly dung beetles and their larvae.

Wattled Ibis appear very dark in the field except for the large white patch on the upper wing which is particularly conspicuous in flight. Good views are required to see the crest and the pendulous wattles; the pale iris is, however, more obvious.

Wattled Ibis, as with other members of the genus *Bostrychia*, is very vocal in flight, especially at dawn and dusk. Its deep, raucous braying calls are a characteristic sound of the Ethiopian plateaux, audible over long distances. Unlike its congeners, however, Wattled Ibis usually nests colonially, often choosing cliff ledges in river valleys.

This behaviour has led to the suggestion that its affinities may lie more with the bald ibises *Geronticus* despite the differences in appearance and jizz. Although no quantitative data are available the Wattled Ibis is not considered to be of conservation concern, being locally common to very common within its range.

Blue-winged Goose

Cyanochen cyanopterus

Blue-winged Goose is only found in the highland grasslands of Ethiopia where pairs, small groups and sometimes flocks are found placidly grazing in the meadows adjacent to the many small watercourses which thread through the rolling hills. This bird is yet another Ethiopian peculiarity. Taxonomically it is treated as a sheld-goose with only very distant relatives. One needs to travel to Peru, Bolivia or Chile in order to see its nearest kin, where the Andean Goose *Chloephaga melanoptera* frequents similar verdant streamside leys. The only other potential confusion species in the Ethiopian highlands is Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*.

At a distance the blue in the wing of Blue-winged Goose is of a light shade and not particularly striking. Close up, however, it shows clean grey tones, fine proportions and a 'pretty face,' which make it an attractive bird, in comparison with its raucous, seemingly mud-bespattered congeners.

Rouget's Rail

Rougetius rougetii

Rouget's Rail is the only member of a genus endemic to Ethiopia. Its unique taxonomic position among the rails is reflected in its rather un-rail-like behaviour. Providing there is not too much human disturbance they are rather confiding birds, happily clambering around in the vegetation rather like moorhens *Gallinula*, only metres from an observer. One site within Addis Ababa is right at the edge of a main road, opposite a large hotel.

Rouget's Rails are often seen in family parties of three to six, and when they are alarmed they will quickly turn and run for cover, flashing their white under-tail coverts as they go. Their

boldness combined with their striking colour make them delightful birds to watch. They are birds of the wet grasslands of the Ethiopian highlands, a habitat which matches the bird for quiet charm.

Stresemann's Bush-crow

Zavattariornis stresemanni

This elegant, baffling bird is known only from within a range of about 6,000 km² around the towns of Yavello and Mega in southern Ethiopia within which it is common. Since this species was first described in 1938, its systematic position has been the subject of much discussion. Now treated as an aberrant corvid, it was previously suggested that its affinities lay with the starlings. (It does, indeed, show a striking superficial resemblance to non-breeding Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*.) Confusion about the Bush-crow is not, however, confined to its taxonomy. Just why it is restricted to such a limited area of apparently unremarkable thornbush and short grass savanna, while avoiding superficially similar habitat nearby, is unknown. The White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* shares a very similar restricted distribution and it has been suggested that both species may have very narrow altitudinal tolerances. A topic ripe for research!

Stresemann's Bush-crow is an insectivore and gregarious when not breeding, with up to 30 individuals foraging together. It also associates with Superb Starlings *Spreo superbis* and White-crowned Starlings *S. albicapillus* when feeding. Nests are loose, spherical structures of thorny twigs built in the crowns of acacias. It is a solitary nester but breeding may be cooperative since three birds regularly attend the nest. The conservation of this species is a cause of concern (it is classified as Vulnerable). Although a sanctuary for both it and the swallow exists in theory it has never been gazetted and no management takes place. The main threats to this habitat are thought to come from the chronic clearance of trees for fuelwood and charcoal, the demand for which will increase as trees from neighbouring parts of the Rift Valley are exhausted.

Abyssinian Catbird *Parophasma galinieri*

Abyssinian Catbird is a taxonomically unique species, being the only member of a genus which is endemic to Ethiopia. It is currently grouped with the babblers, and in its shape, size and behaviour is intermediate between babblers and illadopsises, but used to be considered a flycatcher.

It is not an easy species to see, tending to stick to dense tangles of vegetation in native juniper forest at altitudes of 2,425–3,000 m, where it is often found in pairs. Such areas are often confined to steep-sided gullies and rocky slopes. However, the catbird is easily detected by its melodious, far-carrying song which must make it a contender for the title of 'Most Musical Bird'. This song further confuses its

taxonomic status, as its dulcet tones are a far cry from the noisy cackling of other babblers.

Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii*

It is a spot of luck that we know where Prince Ruspoli's Turaco is found for the bird remained unlocated for many years after the collector, the hapless Prince Ruspoli, was gored to death by an elephant before he could share the joys of this bird with the rest of the ornithological world! And joys indeed they are. This is surely one of Africa's most striking and beautiful turacos.

Until very recently the species was thought to be restricted to southern Ethiopia's juniper forests and to be declining as the forests were gradually

cut down, grazed and turned into open woodland.

However surveys by Luca Borghese in the Borana and Bale provinces of southern Ethiopia in March–April 1995 revealed that the species is much more widespread than was previously thought and was found in a number of localities where it had not previously been recorded (see Recent Reports on page 61 for further details).

Even more interesting is the fact that Luca discovered that the species is not primarily a forest species as had been previously thought, but it occurs principally in drier habitats including open woodlands. He even found it common in areas subject to human disturbance. ☺

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Photospot: Collared Nightjar *Caprimulgus enarratus*

Hugh Chittenden

Most African nightjars Caprimulgidae are associated with savanna or open woodland habitats with Bates's Nightjar *Caprimulgus batesi* and Brown Nightjar *C. binotatus* being two species more closely associated with forest habitats. However, neither species have however been proven to breed within the forest canopy.¹

Two nightjar species are found in Madagascar, the widespread and common Madagascar Nightjar *C. madagascariensis* and the rare endemic Collared Nightjar *C. enarratus*. The latter species is restricted to the undisturbed rainforests of the central-eastern and the north and north-west regions. The habitat is fast disappearing. The species

may also occasionally be found in adjacent secondary growth and in some dry deciduous forests and has recently been recorded in brush forest and mangroves in the Morondava area in western Madagascar.

In October 1994, I was lucky to be shown a roosting bird in the Reserve Speciale d'Analamazaotra/Perinet (18°28'S, 48°28'E), about 930 m above sea-level. The area has an annual average precipitation of about 1,700 mm. The bird had roosted for a number of days in the same spot, and was cautiously approached to within 3 m to obtain photographs. The forest has a high canopy and where the bird roosted the canopy was closed, with little or no

sunlight penetrating to the forest floor. The bird was well camouflaged in the leaf litter.

It is possible that the bird could have been incubating but this was not confirmed for fear of further disturbance. Collared Nightjars were subsequently seen hawking insects above the forest canopy during the evenings.

Acknowledgements

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References

1. Fry, C.H., Keith, S. and Urban, E.K. (eds). 1988. *The Birds of Africa*. Vol III. London: Academic Press.

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